



Preschool Handbook

2026



SAMUEL
MARSDEN
COLLEGIATE SCHOOL

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Dear Parents and Whānau

I wish you, your tamaiti (child) and wider whānau a warm welcome to Marsden Preschool.

Marsden Preschool provides an environment for optimal learning and teaching. We promote attitudes and values that will prepare our tamariki to lead happy, stimulating, useful and fulfilled lives.

We encourage a love of learning in all our students and challenge them all to reach their potential. This is a theme that recurs in educational dialogue the world over and it is what is foremost in our minds at Marsden.

We promote and celebrate individual excellence as well as a team spirit, within a whānau atmosphere.

You will find in this handbook an outline of the Preschool's values, goals and organisation. It highlights relevant aspects of the curriculum and also provides general information that you will require.

We look forward to working with you to make sure your child's time at Marsden Preschool is a fun and fulfilling one. If you have any questions please come and talk to me or send me an email.

Mā te huruhuru, ka rere te manu

Adorn the bird with feathers, and it will fly

Warm regards

Dr Helen McConnell

Head of Preschool

P: (04) 476 8707 Ext 840

E: helen.mcconnell@marsden.school.nz

Marsden School's vision:

Manu Rere Ao > *The bird that flies the world*

Achieving this vision involves laying the foundation for lives of meaning, accomplishment and genuine happiness.

Our values:

Hiranga
Excellence

Manahau
Resilience

Auahatanga
Creativity

Oha
Service

Whanaungatanga
Respectful relationships

Our students are supported to make the most progress possible from their starting point. Being and doing their best is how we define excellence and what it takes to uphold our motto *Ad Summa – Aim for the Highest*.

> Marsden Preschool Philosophy

2026



Marsden Preschool whānau

Our Preschool tamariki, parents, caregivers and wider whānau, kaiako (teachers), the wider Marsden and students' local communities make up our Preschool whānau. Our tamariki bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, values and beliefs from their homes and communities; parents and whānau have different aspirations and expectations for them.



Hauora – Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of our tamariki is paramount. We ensure they feel they belong, in a safe, stable environment that supports their self-worth, identity and confidence alongside their emotional regulation and self-control. ENGAGE™ is an evidence-based approach that supports self-regulation skills through playing games and activities. We implement these strategies into daily curriculum through intentional teaching, and activities that focus on cognitive, emotional and behavioural skills essential for tamariki to develop in their early learning.





Learning and growing

Marsden Preschool's learning programmes are tamaiti-centred and holistic, created within the national Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki. Our programmes are fun and foster a love of learning; creating lifelong, capable, competent and confident learners, ready for their world beyond Preschool. Our future focused teaching and learning focuses on:

- ▶ warm and positive relationships
- ▶ belonging and keeping safe from harm
- ▶ resilience and coping strategies
- ▶ communication: verbal, non-verbal, print and digital
- ▶ identifying emotions (own and others)
- ▶ supporting strengths and interests
- ▶ exploration of the environment
- ▶ independence
- ▶ wonder and curiosity
- ▶ critical thinking.



Aroha

We are committed to and honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This includes maintaining the principles of participation, partnership and protection. We will weave te ao Māori through our teaching and we will honour and respect all cultures within Marsden Preschool. A partnership between parents, whānau and kaiako is the most effective way to provide a quality education for our tamariki. Tamariki and kaiako will work together to protect and nurture each other, our various cultures, values and beliefs and our natural living environment for which we are kaitiaki.

"We believe that the wellbeing of each child is interdependent with the wellbeing of teachers, parents and whānau. Children learn and develop best when their culture, knowledge and community are affirmed and when the people in their lives help them to make connections across settings. It is important that teachers develop meaningful relationships with whānau and that they respect their aspirations for their children, along with those of hapū, iwi and the wider community."

Ministry of Education, 2017

Our Preschool staff are happy to assist you in any way. Please contact us on 476 8707 or via email if you have any queries. Please see our contact details on page 11.



Curriculum

What will my tamaiti learn?

In a safe, secure and positive environment, our aim is to develop the potential of each tamaiti, nurture their confidence and promote a lifelong love of learning.

We recognise, notice and respond to tamariki interests, and involve them in deciding on our major explorations each term.

Each term we conduct an inquiry focus, which extends on tamariki group interests. Inquiry supports tamariki to engage and wonder, explore, discover, explain, share and reflect. This investigation is conducted through focused activities and independent exploration.

Play is greatly valued as a way tamariki will learn about themselves as individuals and also discover the necessary skills of co-operation.

Maths, Science and Digital Technology exist in our everyday environment. Tamariki experience an environment where they develop working theories to make sense of the natural, social, physical, and material worlds. Tamariki learn through play – by doing, by asking questions, by interacting with others, by setting up theories or ideas about how things work and trying them out, and by purposeful use of resources. A strong focus is using communication skills, with group time, stories, discussions and conversations. We encourage tamariki to share their experiences.

Language grows and develops in meaningful contexts, such as dramatic play, rhyme and music. These are valuable methods of developing language when tamariki have a reason to communicate. This leads to tamariki developing thinking skills.

Hauora/Wellbeing

Our approach to hauora is school-wide and embedded in all that we do. Grounded in our school values, wellbeing education at Marsden is intentional and specifically designed to best nurture preschoolers as they grow with us.



What can I do as a parent/caregiver?

Support your tamaiti

We value reciprocal relationships with whānau as part of our Preschool community. We encourage you to talk with kaiako about your child's interests and what they have explored each day.

Encourage your tamaiti in their own special interests and share this with the kaiako.

We also encourage you to share your language and culture with us in Preschool. This could be greetings, numbers and cultural celebrations.

If you would like to share a skill, attend class trips, assist with inquiry-focused activities, read with tamariki or simply help out in Preschool, please talk to our teachers.

Literacy

Early reading and writing skills are introduced with the overall aim to instil a love of reading and a joy of discovering the world of literature. Tamariki 4 years and over are invited to have a named book bag.

We use the iDeal structured literacy approach to guide and support our tamariki to build their confidence with literacy over time. This approach introduces print and symbol concepts, alongside phonological awareness such as rhyme, syllables and sounds.

As part of our literacy programme, we focus on a letter or sound of the week. Your tamaiti is encouraged to bring an item of interest from home that begins with this sound to share at mat time.

Parent Coordinators

The Parent Coordinators encourage the integration of new parents into the Marsden community. They arrange whānau get-togethers and social events within the Preschool. If you would like to help, please talk to our staff.

How will I be updated on my child's learning?

Preschool uses the *EDUCA* online portfolio system to record and share your child's learning assessment and curriculum planning, related to Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum strands and learning outcomes. This may include examples of art work, conversations and learning stories. You will be invited to contribute to your child's learning goals and plan. Stories will support this goal, with kaiako reflecting on each child's learning goal regularly as a team. Each time a story is posted you will be notified by email. Kaiako will update

your child's portfolio regularly. We encourage you to revisit and share your child's learning stories with them, encouraging them to reflect and discuss their progression and learning journey with you. We also encourage you and extended family to contribute to your child's portfolio, sharing comments and stories from your home.

You receive a written report on your child's learning when they leave for school. However, if at any time you wish to discuss your child's progress, let kaiako know and they will be happy to meet with you.

Twice a year in Terms 1 and 3, you will be invited to come in for an individual Parent/Kaiako interview.

What if I have a concern?

If you have a concern, please contact Dr Helen McConnell, Head of Preschool, immediately. Following that, please contact Head of Primary, Jo Burns, who will be happy to discuss any concerns you may have.

Our email addresses are in the format
firstname.lastname@marsden.school.nz

You can find all Marsden staff contact details in the [Staff Directory](#).

Absences

To report absence or lateness, please email helen.mcconnell@marsden.school.nz or phone (04) 476 8707 Ext 840.



Practical Information

Your child's first day

To create a smooth transition, we recommend visits before your tamaiti starts. If your tamaiti is anxious you may wish to leave them for progressively longer periods of time or begin with half a day until they are comfortable in their new environment. It is important to record your child's attendance each day. We use the *Discover* student management system, all adults authorised to pick up and drop off your tamaiti will be allocated a pin number. This is to be used at drop off and pick up times. We also ask that you sign the weekly attendance sheet to record your child's attendance for funding regulations.

What your tamaiti will need

Sun Protection

During Terms 1 and 4, all tamariki are required to bring a named sunhat and we will apply sunblock during the day. Please encourage your tamaiti to leave their sunhat at Preschool.

Spare Clothes

Preschool tamariki enjoy and learn through messy play, and can have toileting accidents during the day. Please pack a change of clothes to ensure they have something available to change into.

What will your tamaiti eat at Preschool?

Your tamaiti should bring a named drink bottle filled with water, as well as a named lunch box containing both morning tea and lunch.

We ask that food be healthy as this helps tamariki's concentration. Parents are strongly encouraged to

provide simple nutritious food. Please see the [Ministry of Health guidelines](#). Please also refer to the Ministry of Health's [recommendations for reducing food-related choking](#).

A shared fruit plate is offered to tamariki at the end of the day. Each tamaiti is asked to bring a piece of fruit to share, for each day they attend during the week.

You can order lunch for your tamaiti from the school cafeteria (operated by Elaine Harris from Fine Cuisine). All Preschool lunch orders must be placed online via [ezlunch](#) by 10.00am on the day of delivery. Fine Cuisine will prepare all orders and deliver them to Preschool.

To order, please use the MyKindo app (iPhone or Android) or order online at www.ezlunch.co.nz

What happens during the day?

We offer a variety of play-based and structured learning opportunities for tamariki throughout the day at Preschool, which support both independent and group exploration. These include literacy, numeracy, arts, te reo Māori, problem solving, digital technology, mindfulness, library, chapel, music, drama, PE and outdoor activities. We focus on supporting each child's holistic development, encompassing their social, physical, emotional, cultural and academic needs.

Tamariki all take part in three mat/whāriki times throughout the day. Mat times are opportunities to focus on sharing, music, iDeal structured literacy, numeracy and our inquiry focus.





Meal times take place three times a day and are together, beginning with a karakia.

8.15am - 9.00am	Sign in and welcomes
9.00am - 2.45pm	Play-based learning, structured learning activities, active play-based inquiry learning, and specialist lessons
2.45pm - 3.15pm	Awahi Time
3.15pm - 3.30pm	End of school day

School Directory

The Marsden School Directory is accessible as a PDF through the [Marsden Portal](#). It includes two versions: a full directory organised by student surname, and a list for each Home/Form Class.

Only parents/caregivers who have agreed to share their email and phone number are included. Any updates to privacy, email address or phone numbers can be made via the Quicklink in the [Marsden Portal](#).

Privacy disclaimer: This directory is intended for the private use of Marsden families only. The contact information provided is to be used solely for school-related communication and social purposes within the Marsden community. Please do not share or distribute this information outside of the Marsden network. Unauthorised use, including for commercial purposes or mass communication, is strictly prohibited.

Emergency Procedures

The Preschool regularly carries out routine earthquake, fire and shelter in place drills so that tamariki are familiar with routines. Teachers take part in lockdown training separate of tamariki.

- Upon enrolment all parents are required to fill in an Emergency Contact form, including someone who

lives in Karori who can collect your tamaiti in case of an emergency, such as an earthquake, that may require school evacuation.

- All families are asked to contribute a box of tissues and two ready-to-eat meals (that do not require water), to be kept at school and used in an emergency.
- In the event of an accident, parents will be contacted as soon as possible by the school nurse or kaiako. If it is judged necessary, your tamaiti will be taken to the Karori Medical Centre or hospital for treatment.

Medication and Immunisation

Preschool are required to have a copy of your child's 15 months and 4 years of age immunisation certificates, completed by your medical centre.

If your tamaiti requires medication, please bring it to school, and complete the chart in the kitchen area with a staff member, authorising the staff to administer medication to your tamaiti.

We adhere to the Ministry of Health guidelines in regards to infectious illnesses. This includes staying home until well and 48 hours after the last episode of an infectious illness. Tamariki with diarrhoea, vomiting or a temperature over 38°C should stay away until symptoms have ceased.

The school will contact you if your tamaiti is unwell and needs to go home. The school nurse will assist sick tamariki and staff will care for them until parents arrive.

Excursions

Throughout the year we organise excursions to support tamariki learning. You will be notified through an eForm on the Marsden Portal. We will often invite



parent volunteers to assist. Most excursions will include a small charge to help cover costs.

We also do spontaneous walks in close proximity to the school and walks around the school grounds. You will have given your consent for this as part of the Enrolment documentation.

What links does Preschool have with the Primary School?

Chapel and Assembly

We join the Primary School assembly every fortnight. Once a term, we aim to share some of our learnings during the assembly. The assembly service is 30 minutes long. The Preschool joins the communion service at the end of each term at St Mary's Anglican Church, Karori.

Library Visits

Tamariki visit the Primary School library once a week for a dedicated reading session, where they can choose and issue one book to take home. Please return it the following week, on or before their library day, and put it in the plastic basket in the locker room.

They also have a second weekly session designed to extend their learning, with a focus on understanding literature and building early research skills to support inquiry learning.

Languages

Specialists teach te reo Māori and waiata in fun and creative ways. Te reo Māori is also incorporated into our daily programme.

Buddy Reading

Each Preschool tamariki has a Year 5 buddy who reads to them and joins in with letter of the week activities every Friday.



Music

Preschool students enjoy a weekly music session with the specialist Primary Music kaiako.

Athletics and Cross Country

We join the Primary School in their Athletic Sports Day and Cross Country event, along with other sporting, cultural and community events throughout the year.

Physical Education (PE)

Tamariki experience a range of PE activities with kaiako encouraging physical skills and coordination. Occasionally we will make use of the tennis courts adjacent to the Preschool grounds or make our way to the fields and gymnasiums. We also subscribe to the Jiggle Jam online programme. This programme is designed to make fitness fun, through aerobics, dance and fitness.

In Term 1 we take part in the SwimWell Learn to Swim programme at Karori Pool, run by trained instructors.

In Terms 2–4 Preschoolers take part in Play Ball training sessions, having the opportunity to develop hand-eye coordination and ball skills.

Photos

Formal class and individual photos are taken in Term 1. There is also an opportunity to have a class photo taken in Term 4.

Transition to School

Kaiako will prepare a transition plan with your child's new entrance teacher. We will speak to you the term before your child prepares for school to ensure we have a learning plan that meets your child's needs and aspirations. Tamariki transitioning to Marsden Primary will begin their transition four weeks before they begin, with three visits to our Year 1 class, but some tamariki will need more. This will be arranged with the Head of

Primary and Year 1 teacher. The purpose is to become familiar with the classroom, kaiako and the different structures in the school.

We encourage you to share your child's written report detailing their learning and progress with their Year 1 kaiako.



Mahitahi Collaboration

Preschool teachers work with the Marsden Primary teachers to ensure tamariki develop reciprocal relationships and a sense of belonging and connection with the Primary School. This allows all tamariki to feel confident in the Primary School space, explore, ask questions, and build confidence.

Policies

If you want to know the Preschool policy on any issue, visit <https://www.marsden.school.nz/about-us/management-governance/policies>

Birthdays and Celebrations

Birthdays are celebrated at Preschool when tamariki turn four and five. We invite whānau to bring in a cake if they wish to share at morning tea time. When tamariki graduate and move on to Primary School, we have a celebration to farewell them and celebrate their learning and achievements. Whānau are invited to be part of this event, and provide a cake or individual cupcakes, and two other food choices to share with the class. Kaiako will give you our food guidelines for this. Girls transitioning to Marsden Primary invite the Year 1 class to attend their celebration as part of their transition and sense of belonging to Samuel Marsden Collegiate School.

Parking

In accordance with Marsden's parking policy and in the interests of child safety, cars are to be parked outside the school grounds. There is an entrance to the Preschool via the steps from Karori Road.

Staff

Marsden Preschool staff are Dr Helen McConnell, Kirsten Whitehead and Enzo Vatselias. Our tamariki refer to us by our surnames.



Dr Helen McConnell
Head Teacher, Head of Preschool
helen.mcconnell@marsden.school.nz



Mrs Kirsten Whitehead
Preschool Teacher
kirsten.whitehead@marsden.school.nz



Mr Enzo Vatselias
Teacher Aide
enzo.vatselias@marsden.school.nz



Mrs Jo Sherlock
Primary Administrator
jo.sherlock@marsden.school.nz



Mrs Jo Burns
Head of Primary
jo.burns@marsden.school.nz

However, exemptions are granted ONLY to parents with small babies or parents with disabilities. Please talk to Dr Helen McConnell if you require an exemption.

Telephone Numbers

The direct dial voice mail phone for Dr Helen McConnell is 476 8707 extension 840. Please contact Jo Sherlock on Ext 832 if you cannot reach the Preschool.

2026 Term Dates

Term 1	Tuesday 27 January – Thursday 2 April <i>Note: Waitangi Day is Friday 6 February</i>
Term 2	Monday 20 April – Friday 3 July <i>Note: ANZAC Day (observed) is Monday 27 April; King's Birthday is Monday 1 June; we have a staff only day Tuesday 2 June</i>
Term 3	Monday 27 July – Friday 25 September <i>Note: We have a staff only day Friday 31 July</i>
Term 4	Monday 12 October – Thursday 3 December <i>Note: Labour Day is Monday 26 October</i>

Communications at Marsden

All news and updates from Preschool will be communicated with you via our Community Message Board on EDUCA. Please ensure you read these updates and speak with us if you have any questions.

Here are the other ways we communicate with you at Marsden:

1

Newsletters and emails

You will receive the Marsden Newsletter by email every Saturday morning during term time from 'Marsden School' (marsden_nz@mail.ptly.com). The newsletter is also available on the Marsden App. The Marsden Newsletter contains the Principal's blog, a link to the school calendar, details of upcoming events, community notices and news celebrating student events and achievements. **Within the Marsden Newsletter, you will find a link to the Preschool Newsletter.**

In addition, you will occasionally receive event invitations from the same Marsden School email address, and emails directly from Head of Preschool, Helen McConnell and Primary Administrator, Jo Sherlock.

2

Marsden website

The [Marsden website](#) is primarily designed for prospective families, but useful information for Marsden parents/caregivers (such as uniform guidelines, term dates etc.) can be found under QUICKLINKS in the main navigation menu. For school news and events, you can access the [Community](#) website via the blue bar at the top of the Marsden website.

3

The Marsden Portal

Log in to the [Marsden Portal](#) for access to specific information about your child, including attendance records, reports etc., as well as your account and contact details. You can access the Marsden Portal in the blue bar at the top of the Marsden website.

4

Emergency information

Emergency information will be posted on the homepage of our website. We also use the Marsden App to send you any emergency alerts.

5

The Marsden App

We encourage you to download the Marsden App. We use the App to send you any emergency alerts. You are also able to access most of the features of the Marsden Portal, along with school contact details, the school calendar and the weekly newsletter.

6

News and Social Media

We share and celebrate school happenings and achievements on:

Social media - Facebook [MarsdenNZ](#) | YouTube [MarsdenNZ](#) | Instagram [SamuelMarsdenSchool](#) | LinkedIn [samuel-marsden-collegiate-school-karori](#)

School News page - <https://community.marsden.school.nz/#schoolnews> (you can filter on Preschool news)

Got a great news story you'd like to share with us? Email news@marsden.school.nz

Campus map



Welcome to
Marsden Preschool.

We are glad you and your
family have joined us and
look forward to making
this special time a fun and
fulfilling experience for
your tamaiti.



Marsden Preschool
Marsden Ave, Karori, Wellington
(04) 476 8707

marsden.school.nz